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STAT

No trace discovered of kidnaped priest

From Chicago Tribune wires

BEIRUT—Police and Moslem militiamen reported no progress Wednesday in their search for a kidnaped Chicago-area priest.

"We have nothing so far, and the other [militia] forces say they have nothing new," a police source said.

At the Vatican, Pope John Paul II appealed for the release of the cleric, Rev. Lawrence Martin Jenco, 50. And in the priest's hometown of Joliet, Ill., masses were said Wednesday for his safe return.

At St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Church in Joliet, 80 people at the special service began by singing "Let There Be Peace On Earth."

"People all over the world where Father Jenco has worked are praying for his safety today," said Rev. Edward Poff, former pastor of St. Bernard's and a close friend of the kidnaped priest. "Father Jenco is probably praying for his captors right now and I believe he doesn't see these men as his enemies."

BISHOP JOSEPH IMESCH, of the Joliet diocese, said during the mass, that "Father Jenco was prepared for any sacrifice for his work and now we have to be prepared for good news and bad news, but we want it to be good news."

Former parishioners of Father Jenco in Belen, N.M., were to hold a special mass Wednesday night.

Gunmen Tuesday abducted Jenco, director of the Catholic Relief Services of Lebanon, from his chauffeur-driven car in mostly Moslem West Beirut. His driver was beaten, and the car was driven away by assailants firing weapons into the air.

A spokesman for the Catholic organization said Jenco is suffering

from a severe heart ailment.

"His physicians are extremely anxious that Father Jenco be released for continued treatment," the spokesman said.

BUT POLICE AND militia groups in West Beirut reported no progress in their search.

Sources close to the investigation said a friend of Father Jenco had received a telephone call after the abduction indicating that the priest had not been harmed.

Investigators here have speculated that the kidnaping may be related to the arrest in Italy last Nov. 27 of seven Lebanese men in connection with an alleged plot to blow up the U.S. Embassy in Rome. An eighth suspect was arrested in Zurich and a ninth was being sought.

After the arrests, an anonymous telephone caller claiming to represent the Islamic Holy War terrorist organization told Beirut's leftist As-Safir newspaper that the men arrested in Italy were innocent and demanded their release.

ISLAMIC HOLY WAR [Jihad al-Islami] is believed to be a pro-Iranian group of extremist Shiite Moslems. The group has claimed responsibility for many attacks on French and American targets in the Middle East.

The shadowy group claimed it abducted three of the Americans reported missing last year: Jeremy Levin, Beirut bureau chief of Cable News Network, on March 7; William Buckley, a U.S. Embassy political officer, on March 16, and Rev. Benjamin Weir, a Presbyterian minister, on May 8.